

Migrant Smuggling in the Western Balkan 2022

European Migrant Smuggling Centre

*Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration:
28 September 2022*



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Europol Unclassified - Basic Protection Level

The background of the slide is a photograph of the Europol building facade. The word 'EUROPOL' is written in large, white, three-dimensional letters on the building's exterior. The image is overlaid with a dark blue diagonal shape on the left side, which contains the text.

I. Situational picture

Statistic, main trends & threats

II. Europol's response

Situational picture in 2022

Statistic

- The migration flow from the Western Balkan region strongly affects EU countries;
Example: increased migration flow to AT, CZ, DE, HU and SI
- Migrant smugglers and criminal networks strongly involved in facilitation of migration flow from the Western Balkan region
- January – August 2022 increase in detected migrant smuggling cases
Example: HU 89%, SI 20 %, HR 14 %



Situational picture in 2022

Main trends

- **Most common modi operandi of migrant smugglers : no change**

Smuggling is concealment in vehicles, in particular cars, (mini-)vans, and lorries

Arrested smugglers: drivers citizens of WB countries & 3rd country nationals sharing nationality with irregular migrants



Source: HU border police

Situational picture in 2022

Main trends

- **Potential abuse of visa policies of Western Balkan Countries**

Increased reporting on smuggling Cuban, Indian, Tunisian and Turkish from the region

***Cubans:** A mixed transnational network with criminal cells along the route: RU – RS – NM – GR (IT) – ES*

***Turkish:** by plane from Turkey to Serbia to neighboring countries – in vehicles – cars, vans and lorries – on their way to the final destination in the EU.*



Situational picture in 2022

Main trends & threats



Increase reporting on use of violence along the Western Balkan routes

- deadly traffic accidents (cars, vans & lorries)
- attacking/shooting at law enforcements officers
- migrant smuggling advertising video showing weapons
- criminal networks armed with weapons
- clashes between criminal networks



Possible further increase in migrant smuggling cases & violence



Europol's response

- Operational agreement with AL, BA, ME, NM & RS
- Working arrangement with XK*
- Liaison Officers in Europol: AL, ME , NM & RS – JLT
Migrant Smuggling & THB
- Priority cases: supporting on going investigations in the field
- Under construction: Operational Task Force (OTF) aiming to combat violent migrant smuggling networks operating along the Western Balkan Routes



**This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence*



Thank you for your
attention

Any
questions?

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